
Question-answer sequences in institutional discourse: Constructing the defendant

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss question- answer sequences in discourse within institutional settings. Analysis focuses on data coming from parliamentary and forensic procedures, interviews that deal with the so called ‘Lagarde list’ case and two violent incidents that took place during extensive protest events in two major European capitals, namely London and Athens. The aim of the analysis is a) to discuss question/answer pairs in various formal institutional contexts and b) to question the boundaries among seemingly distinct speech-events pertaining to political, forensic and media discourse.

Keywords: question/answer sequences, institutional discourse

1. Introduction

The aim of the paper is to discuss question/answer pairs in three institutional contexts, namely parliamentary, forensic and media and to question the boundaries among seemingly distinct speech-events. Based on the assumptions that a) “the distinctiveness of each speech exchange system rests upon the underlying method by which the participants take turns at talk” (Clayman & Heritage 2002: 21) and b) questioning as a discursive practice is “a central vehicle for constructing social worlds and reflecting existing ones” (Tracy and Robles 2009: 131-2), we aim at investigating the investigator/defendant identities as these are constructed and negotiated via question/answer sequences in the aforementioned contexts.

To this end, we examine interrogative structures addressed to interviewees and witnesses, by journalists, lawyers and MP members appointed as investigators, as well as the response part of the adjacency pair under scrutiny. Yes/no and wh-questions, prefaced questions introduced via prefatory statements, reported speech, formulations and repetitions of previous utterances –which either recycle prior discourse or reproduce discourse publicized in different contexts– are examined within the sequences they occur for their structural characteristics (Clayman & Heritage 2002;

Holt & Johnson 2010; Ehrlich 2010). What is more, they are examined for the construction of alternative narratives as far as the events, the modes of participation and the ideological stances and identities of the addressees are concerned (Komter 2006; Heffer 2010).

Additionally, we examine the re-contextualisation strategies employed by addressees in their responsive contributions (Γεωργαλίδου 2012). Both questions and answers are shown to contribute to the construction of variable identities for the interlocutors: journalists, politicians and lawyers alike, routinely, attempt to portray interviewees as non-dependable narrators of the events in question, whereas interviewees resist such constructions. Moreover, question/answer pairs prove constitutive for the organization of discourse in political/parliamentary, media and forensic settings, which, despite pertaining to different institutions, activate similar strategies for the construction of adversary narrative accounts of events that directly or indirectly entail political/ideological stances.

1.2 *Questions in the literature*

Questions are prototypically locutions requesting information that the speaker does not already have or are “a form of social action, designed to seek information and accomplished in a turn at talk by means of interrogative syntax” (Heritage 2002: 1427). They can take the form¹ of:

- Wh-questions
- Yes/no-questions
- Prefatory statements with the illocutionary force of a yes/no question (+/- question- tags)
- Alternative questions (either/or)
- Prefaced (wh- or yes/no-) questions introduced via
 - prefatory statements or reported speech
 - formulations
 - repetitions of previous utterances, which either recycle prior discourse or reproduce discourse publicized in different contexts

¹ For a discussion of the design of questions in various institutional settings see Clayman & Heritage 2002: 100-113 and Tracy & Robles 2009: 133-135.

Nevertheless, as the rough typology presented above shows, utterances recognizable as questions and the doing of questioning can be accomplished without interrogative form, without possessing the purpose of information seeking and even with the absence of both (Tracy & Robles 2009). Utterances doing questioning, therefore, form part of the organization of discourse in various institutional settings; they are constitutive for interviewing and investigative procedures as they not only serve the primary function of requesting information, but they also serve as means for the construction of alternative accounts of events in adversarial contexts (Komter 2006; Heffer 2010), which are indirectly addressed to an overhearing audience (Clayman & Heritage 2002; Hobbs 2003). Based on the above mentioned properties, questions can only be fully understood as pragmatic objects.

As much as interrogative syntax, *wh*-question words, question tags and interrogative intonation contextualize the act of questioning, the illocutionary force of requesting information, confirmation, even physical action- or none of the above- can only be retrieved through the sequential analyses of stretches of talk-in-interaction. What is more, yes/no questions in particular “have a prospective import” narrowing the parameters of an acceptable response (Clayman & Heritage 2002: 13) on the basis of the exhibited preference system (in a conversation analytic sense) for agreement as opposed to disagreement. Yes/no questions, prefatory statements and prefaced questions therefore, construct alternative versions of events seeking confirmation, undermining the interlocutor’s credibility (in investigative procedures, Matoesian 2005; Ehrlich 2010) and at the same time preserving the neutrality of the interviewer/investigator. Answers on the other hand can either be dutiful, resistant or evasive.

As was stated earlier, based on the assumptions that the distinctiveness of speech exchange systems rests upon the underlying method by which the participants take turns at talk (Clayman & Heritage 2002) and that questions are a central vehicle for constructing social worlds and reflecting existing ones (Tracy and Robles 2009), in the following sections we discuss question/answer pairs in various formal institutional contexts.

2. The data

Analysis is carried out on excerpts culled from three different speech events, i.e. news interviews, a parliamentary hearing and trial proceedings:

- a. The hearing of George Papakonstantinou by the Special Parliament Committee on Institutions and Transparency
- b. The interview of George Papakonstantinou by Ellie Stai on NET
- c. The Jody Mc Intyre interview on BBC
- d. The Alexandros Grigoropoulos trial proceedings

The person interviewed in events (a) and (b) is an ex Minister of Finance (2009-2011), George Papakonstantinou, responsible for the management of the so called 'Lagarde list'. Even though official charges against him had not been pressed at the time, he is questioned on alleged malpractices during his office, namely his actions concerning the registering and management of files containing information on Greek depositors/deposits in foreign banks that had officially been made available by his then French counterpart Christine Lagarde.

In events (a) and (b) the interviewee is a member of the political personnel allegedly responsible for errors and omissions. In events (c) and (d), on the other hand, the interviewees/witnesses speak as the victim of violent deeds on the part of the authorities. Despite the fact that the events examined pertain to different genres (a trial in Greece and a news interview in Britain that was nevertheless translated, reported and discussed by the Greek media), as well as different linguistic and cultural contexts (Greece-Britain), the questioning strategies of the institutional questioners (of the journalist and the defense counselor, respectively) present significant analogies (Γεωργαλίδου 2012).

Both events involve violence against protesters (Mc Intyre) and passersby (Alexandros Grigoropoulos) by police officers, during times of social turbulence and rioting. In the first event, a disabled person with cerebral paralysis was pulled out of his wheel chair, dragged down the road and struck with a button. In the second, a fifteen year old boy ended up dead after being shot in the heart. The excerpts discussed come from the transcribed interview of Mc Intyre in BBC and the official proceedings of the Grigoropoulos trial, respectively. Analysis of excerpts coming from all four events is presented in the following section.

3. Analysis

3.1 *The hearing of George Papakonstantinou, ex Minister of Finances, by the Special Parliament Committee on Institutions and Transparency (24/10/2012)*

As the Special Parliament Committee on Institutions and Transparency decided at the beginning of the sessions, interviewers are not allowed to engage the interviewee in direct conversation. Instead, they pose questions that form part of long turns presenting their analysis of the political context framing the events under scrutiny. Various interrogative structures² come up at different parts of each speech and are to be noted down and answered when the addressee is officially granted the floor by the MP chairing the committee. Excerpt (1) is an example of discourse produced during these sessions. The interrogative utterances follow narrative accounts of events based on the speaker's perception of them. In the context of a parliamentary hearing, accounts of alleged actions that contradict the institutional role of the interviewee frame him as the defendant, i.e. a minister of finances who withholds a list of possible tax-evaders. Repeatedly posed interrogative structures questioning his actions reinforce this construction.

Excerpt 1

(Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Nea Dimokratia, Proceedings, 24/10/2012, page 28)

(...) Ύστερα, αφού ήρθε στο γραφείο σας, πρωτοκολλήθηκε, δεν πρωτοκολλήθηκε, το ερώτημα είναι³, όταν το πήρατε στα χέρια σας, δεν το δώσατε κατευθείαν στο ΣΔΟΕ, είναι σαφές το κρατήσατε εσείς. Είναι προφανές από τα συμπεράσματα που μπορώ να βγάλω ότι το κράτησε το γραφείο σας. Υπήρχε χειριστής μέσα στο γραφείο σας γι' αυτό ειδικά ή το χειριζόσασταν αποκλειστικά εσείς μέχρι να φτάσει στα χέρια του κ. Διώτη; Και θα έρθω στον κ. Καπελέρη στη συνέχεια. Τι έγινε σε όλο αυτό το χρονικό διάστημα; Αυτό σε τίνος χέρια βρισκόταν; Ποιος το χειριζόταν, ποιος το αξιοποιούσε, ποιος το επεξεργαζόταν;

² *Italics* is used to mark the interrogatives in the excerpts discussed. Numbers indicate the position of structures within the excerpts. Otherwise texts retain the form in which they appear in the Proceedings of the Special Parliament Committee on Institutions and Transparency, 24/10/2012.

³ As the next part of the sentence that could be read as an indirect question is answered by the speaker himself, the phrase "the question is" can be considered a pre-announcement of the direct questions that follow the speaker's account of events. Nevertheless, the whole of Pavlopoulos long contribution (3.103 words in total) calls for the acceptance or rejection of his account on the part of Papakonstantinou.

(...) Then, after it was delivered at your office, it was registered, it wasn't registered, the question is, when it was placed in your hands, you didn't give it to SDOE right away, it is clear you kept it yourself. It is obvious from the conclusions I can draw that it was kept at your office. *Was there anybody working specifically on it at your office, or were you working on it exclusively until Mr Diotis received it?* And I will come to Mr Kapeleri next. What happened during all that time? *That (cd), whose hands was it in? Who was handling it, who was making use of it, who was working on it?*

Excerpt (2) is part of the contribution of a then opposition MP who begins her talk with a critical statement as to the ineffectiveness of the selected procedure (1). In what follows, she prefaces a number of interrogative structures directly questioning the whereabouts of the cd under scrutiny with an account of both the preceding questions posed by Pavlopoulos (excerpt 1), that as far as she is concerned were left unanswered (2, 4) and the interviewee's previous responsive contributions (3). Similarly to excerpt 1, the interviewee is again portrayed as the defendant via repeated questions addressed to him insinuating the breaching of institutions on his part. This is a construction acknowledged by the interviewee in his responsive contributions (excerpt 3 "...she thinks she is in a courtroom during a preliminary investigative procedure").

Excerpt 2

(Zoi Konstantopoulou, SYRIZA, Proceedings, 24/10/2012, page 75)

(1) Ξεκινώ επισημαίνοντας ότι θα ήταν πολύ πιο χρήσιμο, κ. Παπακωνσταντίνου, να απαντάτε στις ερωτήσεις που τίθενται μια-μια, γιατί έτσι ίσως παίρναμε και κάποιες απαντήσεις. (2) Το λέω γιατί σάς έγινε κατ' επανάληψη μια πολύ συγκεκριμένη ερώτηση, παρενέβην και εγώ για να την απαντήσετε και ακόμη δεν την έχετε απαντήσει. Σας τη θέτω λοιπόν, ξανά και παρακαλώ να την απαντήσετε συγκεκριμένα. (3) Είπατε ότι κρατήσατε εσείς το CD που ήρθε με διπλωματικό σάκο από τη Γαλλία και είπατε ότι δημιουργήσατε αντίγραφο του CD αυτού, το οποίο παραδώσατε στον κ. Διώτη. (4) Σας υπεβλήθη η ερώτηση από τον κ. Παυλόπουλο τουλάχιστον δύο φορές και από εμένα παρεμβαίνοντας άλλη μία και σας υποβάλλω την ερώτηση για τέταρτη φορά. Σε ποιον παραδώσατε αυτό το CD για φύλαξη, όπως λέτε, εμπιστευτική; Ποιο είναι το φυσικό πρόσωπο; Σε ποιον άνθρωπο εγχειρήσατε

αυτό το CD; Το ίδιο ισχύει με την τύχη του εγγράφου με τον οποίο σας απεστάλη αυτό το CD. Πού βρίσκεται και σε ποιον το παραδώσατε. Συντάχθηκε οποιοδήποτε πρωτόκολλο παράδοσης παραλαβής; Μέχρι σήμερα που φτάνουμε τέλη Οκτωβρίου του 2012, αναζητήσατε αυτό το πρωτότυπο;(...)

(1) I will begin by underlying the fact that it would have been much more useful Mr Papakonstantinou, if you answered the questions posed one by one because in that way we might get some answers. (2) I'm saying that because a very specific question was repeatedly posed to you, I intervened myself so that you could answer it, and still you haven't. Therefore, I am posing it again and I request a specific answer from you. (3) You said that you kept the cd that was delivered in a diplomatic sack from France and you said that you created a copy of this cd, that you later delivered to Mr Dioti. (4) A question was posed to you by Mr Pavlopoulos at least twice and by me, intervening, once again and I am posing the question for the fourth time. *To whom did you deliver/ this cd in order for it to be, as you are asserting, confidentially safeguarded. Who is the actual person? To whom did you give the cd? The same question applies to the document that was sent to you together with the cd. Where is it and who did you give it to? Were both documents officially registered? Until today, the end of October 2012, have you looked for the original? (...)*

Despite the fact that Papakonstantinou commits himself to answering the questions posed to him, in nine-pages of transcribed exchanges he refrains from actually giving an answer as to the name of the person who was in charge of the documents received during his office. Instead, he provides a long account of his ministry (approximately 2.900 words) and finally questions the interviewee's perception of the procedure as a preliminary investigative⁴ one (excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3

(George Papakonstantinou, PASOK, Proceedings, 24/10/2012, page 89)

(...) Θα απαντήσω, παρότι μου είναι λίγο έως πολύ προφανές, ότι η κυρία Βουλευτής δεν ρωτάει για να πάρει απαντήσεις και λυπάμαι που το λέω. Το είδος των ερωτήσεων που θέτει, αλλά και ο τόνος των ερωτήσεων και το

⁴ Investigation Committees are vested with all the powers of the investigating authorities and the Public Prosecutor.

γεγονός ότι επανειλημμένα αναφέρεται σε «καταθέσεις» και τονίζει ότι «ανασκεύασε την κατάθεσή του», νομίζω, δείχνουν πολύ καθαρά, ότι θεωρεί πως βρίσκεται σε αίθουσα δικαστηρίου και σε διαδικασία προανακριτικής εξέτασης.

(...) I will answer, despite the fact that it is more or less obvious to me that Mrs MP is not asking to get answers, I am sorry to say that. The kind of questions she poses, as well as the tone of her voice in the questions and the fact that she is repeatedly referring to “statements” and stresses the fact that “he changed his statement”, I think, make obvious the fact that she thinks she is in a courtroom during a preliminary investigative procedure.

In the next excerpt, Konstantopoulou again repeats the question as to the name of the cd holder. The three interrogative contributions are prefaced with an account concerning the number of times the information had been requested up to that point (1, 3, 8), an account of the evasive answers provided that far (2), a challenge of Papakonstantinou’s perception of the procedure (4), the interviewer’s account of what she thinks happened (6), followed by directly reporting preceding discourse produced by the interviewee (5, 7). Again, the re-introduction of questions that have been posed repeatedly in prior discourse, frame the procedure as an investigative one and the interviewee as the defendant.

Excerpt 4

(Zoi Konstantopoulou, SYRIZA, Proceedings, 24/10/2012, page 103-104)

(...(1)) Σας ρώτησα κ. Παπακωνσταντίνου και σας ρωτώ για έβδομη φορά. Σε ποιον παραδώσατε το CD και το συνοδευτικό του έγγραφο. (2) Η απάντηση τα παρέδωσε στο γραφείο μου, τα παρέδωσε για εμπιστευτική φύλαξη, τα παρέδωσε και δεν ξέρω πού είναι, δεν είναι απάντηση. (3) Είναι πάρα πολύ συγκεκριμένη ερώτηση, σας την έχω κάνει ήδη έξι φορές και όχι μόνον εγώ. Σας την απευθύνω για έβδομη φορά. Ποιος λέτε, ότι κατέχει σήμερα αυτό το CD και το έγγραφο. (4) Εδώ δεν είναι συζήτηση, (5) γιατί απαντήσατε ότι εδώ είναι μια συζήτηση και εμείς θέλουμε να εκτρέψουμε τη συζήτηση. Εδώ δεν είναι συζήτηση. Εδώ είναι η Επιτροπή «Θεσμών και Διαφάνειας» και αποστολή έχει να ελέγξει, εάν οι θεσμοί λειτουργούν με διαφάνεια. Ποια είναι η λειτουργία

των θεσμών. Και αυτό το οποίο εσείς αυτή τη στιγμή αποτυπώνετε, είναι η αδιαφάνεια στη λειτουργία και των υπουργών και των θεσμών. (6) Κρατήσατε το CD, δεν το παραδώσατε σε καμία υπηρεσία. Κρατήσατε το έγγραφο, δεν το παραδώσατε σε καμία υπηρεσία και λέτε (7) δεν το έχω. Το παρέδωσα εμπιστευτικά για φύλαξη. (8) Για έβδομη, για όγδοη φορά θα επανέλθω εάν δεν απάντησε. Σε ποιο φυσικό πρόσωπο, το ονοματεπώνυμο εκείνου στο οποίο μας λέτε ότι παραδώσατε αυτό το CD.

(...1) I have already asked you Mr Papakonstantinou and I am asking you for the seventh time. *To whom did you hand the cd and the accompanying document over to.* (2) The answer, he handed it over to my office, he gave them to be safeguarded as classified documents, he handed them over and I don't know where they are, is not an answer. (3) The question is absolutely specific, I have already repeated it six times and not just me. I am addressing the question to you for the seventh time. *Who, you are saying, has this cd and the document today.* (4) This is not a discussion, (5) because you claimed that this is a discussion that we wish to change. This is not a discussion. This is the Committee on Institutions and Transparency and its mission is to see that institutions function transparently. What the function of institutions is. And what you are actually exhibiting at this moment is the lack of transparency in the way ministers and institutions function. (6) You kept the cd, you gave it to no other service. You kept the document, you gave it to no other service and you are saying (7) I do not have it. I confidentially handed it over to be safeguarded. (8) For the seventh, the eighth time I will repeat if he didn't answer. *Who is the person, the name and the surname of the person you are saying you gave the cd to.*

In the final excerpt, one of the not so rare conversational incidents, initiated and closed by the chair of the committee (turns 1, 6), Papakonstantinou directly evades reference to the person in charge of the cd by challenging his interlocutor's authority to pose the questions (turn 2). The expressive speech act of apology ("I am sorry") can be considered ironic, as the regret script is repealed by the subsequent indirect but nevertheless face threatening act of refusal ("this is my answer"). His responses are all the more face threatening as he directly dictates the form of the procedure (turn 4, "we are not going to have a conversation"), in an attempt to reverse power asymmetries.

Except 5

(Proceedings, 24/10/2012, page 111-112)

(1) ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΟΣ ΝΕΡΑΝΤΖΗΣ (Πρόεδρος της Επιτροπής): Το λόγο έχει ο κ. Παπακωνσταντίνου.

(2) ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ (Τέως Υπουργός Οικονομικών): Κύριε Πρόεδρε, θεωρώ ότι έχω απαντήσει στα περισσότερα ερωτήματα της κυρίας Κωνσταντοπούλου, αλλά αν θέλετε θα διατρέξω και θα απαντήσω σε κάποια. Ρωτάτε για έβδομη φορά «σε ποιον παραδώσατε» και δε σας άρεσε η απάντησή μου. Λυπάμαι, αυτή είναι η απάντησή μου.

(3) ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Το όνομα κ. Παπακωνσταντίνου, σας ρώτησα. Σε ποιον άνθρωπο;

(4) ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΠΑΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ (Τέως Υπουργός Οικονομικών): Σας απάντησα ότι έδωσα στο γραφείο μου και δε θα κάνουμε διάλογο.

(5) ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Δεν θα το ορίσετε εσείς. Πρέπει να πείτε σε ποιόν το παραδώσατε.

(6) ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΟΣ ΝΕΡΑΝΤΖΗΣ (Πρόεδρος της Επιτροπής): Απαντά εκείνος. Απαντήστε, κ. Παπακωνσταντίνου και κλείνει αυτή η ερώτηση.

(1) ANASTASIOS NERANTZIS (Chair of the Committee): I call upon Mr Papakonstantinou to speak.

(2) GEORGE PAPAKONSTANTINOU (Ex Minister of Finances): Mr President, I believe I have answered most of Mrs Konstantopoulou's questions, but if you wish me to, I will go through and I will answer some more. You are asking for the seventh time "who did you hand the cd over to" and you do not like my answer. I am sorry, this is my answer.

(3) ZOI KONSTANTOPOULOU: Mr Papakonstantinou, I specifically asked you what the name is. Who is the person?

(4) GEORGE PAPAKONSTANTINOU (Ex Minister of Finances): I have already told you that I handed it over to my office and we are not going to have a conversation.

(5) ZOI KONSTANTOPOULOU: It is not up to you to determine that. You have to tell us who you handed it over to.

(6) ANASTASIOS NERANTZIS (Chair of the Committee): It is his turn to answer. Answer Mr Papakonstantinou and the question is closed.

In excerpts 1-5 discussed above, all (wh- or yes/no-) questions are prefaced by accounts or reported speech, formulations and repetitions of previous utterances. They all project scenarios which contradict the interviewee's version of events and highlight the fact that in no point does he contribute straightforward answers as to the whereabouts of the original cd. Despite the fact that the procedure is not a preliminary investigation, the way questions are posed by the members of the committee frame the interviewee as the defendant (excerpts 1, 2, 4, 5). On his part, Papakonstantinou strongly resists this framing by evading direct answers and by challenging the committee's authority to reintroduce questions (excerpts 3, 5).

3.2 *The interview of George Papakonstantinou on NET by Ellie Stai (7/1/2013)*

The subsequent excerpts pertain to the transcribed⁵ interview of George Papakonstantinou in NET by Ellie Stai. In excerpt (6), the interlocutors provide contrasting accounts of the events concerning the choice on the part of the ex minister not to officially register the cd. Papakonstantinou sticks to his narrative of the events surrounding the delivery of the cd (turns 1, 8, 14, 16), whereas Stai repeatedly challenges this narrative by initiating assessment/agreement-disagreement sequences that disconfirm prior accounts and call for an admission of the fact that French authorities treated and delivered the cd as an official document (turns 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17). All of Stai's contributions pertain to assessment/agreement-disagreement type sequences (Pomerantz 1984) and require yes/no responses, with a strong preference for the affirmative, as 2nd pair parts. All contributions partially overlap as both interlocutors strive to promote their dissenting version of the events discussed.

More specifically, as far as Stai's contributions are concerned, turns 2, 3, 5, 15, 17, 19 are structured as dispreferred disagreements (Pomerantz 1984), being introduced with the agreement markers "yes"/"ok" (turns 2, 5, 15, 19) followed by the disagreement marker "but" (turns 3, 5, 17) or as repair initiations (turn 21). Turns 7, 9, 11 and 13 are structured as strong disagreements as they do not contain agreement

⁵ Transcription symbols used for excerpts 6, 7 & 8:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - | self-repair |
| / | interruption |
| (.) | pause |
| = | latching |
| [] | simultaneous speech, |
| : | extended sound or syllable |
| <u>underlined segments</u> | speaker emphasis |

markers and directly contradict the initial evaluative account by Papakonstantinou as to the insignificance of the cd (turn 1: “It is just a common cd in an envelope”). Accordingly, Papakonstantinou counter-assesses Stai’s accounts by 2nd pair parts structured as partial, therefore weak, disagreements (turns 4, 6, 8, 12, 18). However, in turns 14 and 16, he upgrades his disagreement by directly disconfirming Stai’s account with a series of negative structures (“no-no”, “without knowing”, “the French are not saying”).

Excerpt 6

1. Π: (...) Είναι ένα απλό cd μέσα σε ένα φάκελο. Δεν είναι κάτι διαφορετικό
[δεν έχει έτσι ε:]/
2. Σ: [Ναι εντάξει.]
3. Σ: Το οποίο έχει επισημοποιηθεί όμως γιατί έρχεται
[μέσω της πρεσβείας.]
4. Π: [Το οποίο-το οποίο όμως] εξακολουθεί να έχει απόρρητα αρχεία
[και αυτό εξηγεί]/
5. Σ: [Ναι, είναι διπλω]ματική οδός [που έρχεται όμως, έτσι?]
6. Π: [Δεν είναι κλασσική-
[δεν είναι κλασσική]/=
7. Σ: [Είναι επίσημη-επίσημη οδός]
8. Π: =δεν είναι κλασσική διπλωματική οδός και αυτό θα εξηγήσει και γιατί
έγινε ο χειρισμός ο οποίος έγινε. Έ-έρχεται λοιπόν στα δικά μου τα
[χέρια]/
9. Σ: [Από τη] γαλλική [πλευρά]=
10. Π: [και έχει]/
11. Σ: = υπήρξε πρωτόκολλο αποστολής όμως και παράδοσης στην Ελληνική
πλευρά
12. Π: Ε: με τον πρέσβη μας [ο οποίος υπέγραψε]
13. Σ: [Οι Γάλλοι δηλαδή] το έκαναν [εντελώς τυπικά]
14. Π: [Ο-όχι] ο πρέσβης
μας υπέγραψε ότι παρέλαβε ένα cd χωρίς να ξέρει τι έχει μέσα και στο
[διαβιβαστικό]=
15. Σ: [Εντάξει]

16. Π: =οι Γάλλοι δεν λένε τι έχει μέσα το cd και αυτό είναι πάρα πολύ σημαντικό. [Δεν το λένε, έτσι?]
17. Σ: [Αλλά όμως έχουνε] κάνει όλη την τυπική διαδικασία που έπρεπε να [κάνουνε]
18. Π: [Ναι] Έχουνε κάνει μια διαδικασία παράδοσης ε αλλά ε με πάτε κατευθείαν πρι-πριν πάω στο τι ακριβώς ελέγχθη [να δούμε τι έχει μέσα] =
19. Σ: [ναι (.) ναι (.) ναι]
20. Π: = αυτό το cd γιατί υπάρχει έτσι μια αίσθηση ότι μέσα υπήρχε μια λίστα. Μέσα υπήρχανε περίπου 2000 αρχεία excel φύλα [επεξεργασίας]
21. Σ: [Κοιτάξτε] όταν λέμε αρχεία, τι εννοούμε κύριε Παπακωνσταντίνου?
1. Π: (...) It is just a common cd in an envelope. It is not something different [it does not have anything eh]/
2. Σ: [Yes ok.]
3. Σ: Still that has been made official because it comes [through the embassy.]
4. Π: [That-that still has] classified documents [and that explains]/
5. Σ: [Yes, it is through diplo]matic procedures [that is being delivered, isn't it?]
6. Π: [It is not classic-] [it is not classic/=]
7. Σ: [It is the official procedure]
8. Π: =It is not via classic diplomatic procedures and that will explain why it was handled the way it was. It- thus it comes to [my hands]/
9. Σ: [On the] French [side]=
10. Π: [and it has]/
11. Σ: = it was officially registered that it had been sent and delivered to the Greek authorities
12. Π: Eh with our ambassador [who signed]
13. Σ: [the French that is] followed [absolutely formal procedures]

14. Π: [No-no] our ambassador signed that he received/παρέλαβε a cd without knowing what was in it and in the [cover letter]=
15. Σ: [Ok]
16. Π: =the French are not saying what is in the cd and this is very important. [They are not saying that. Correct?]
17. Σ: [But they did] follow all the formal procedures they [were supposed to]
18. Π: [Yes] they have followed the delivery protocol eh but eh you are taking me straight be-before I tackle what was said exactly [to see what is in]=
19. Σ: [yes (.) yes (.) yes]
20. Π: =this cd because there is eh a feeling that there was a list in it. In it there were approximately two thousand excel [documents]
21. Σ: [Look] when we say documents, what do we mean Mr Papakonstantinou?

Excerpt (7), introduces the question of safeguarding the cd, the contents of which the interviewee had claimed to be classified. It is initiated by an account of the facts recounted so far (turns 1, 3, 5) which is concluded by an elliptically structured direct wh-question (turn 5, “and the cd?”). Turn 10 is a prefaced yes/no question, which, despite the fact that it is uttered in a neutral tone (low pitch- no stressed syllables-normal speed), therefore not pertaining to an aggressive interviewing style (Clayman & Heritage 2002), can be considered face threatening as it indirectly questions the interviewee’s ability to perceive the severity of his decisions (turn 10, “will you be able to understand that this query is understandable?”). In this excerpt, Stai reintroduces the question as to the whereabouts of the cd 4 times (turns 5, 7, 10, 12). In the contribution that concludes the excerpt (turn 17), the interviewee challenges the interviewer’s line of questioning and attempts to reverse power relationships by changing the agenda. He rather aggressively refers to his overloaded schedule as “the minister of the memorandum” (stress on the final syllable) and he indirectly attempts to diminish the significance of the Lagarde list affair.

Excerpt 7

1. Σ: Δε σας πάω μπρος πίσω. [Γυρνάμε-γυρνάμε γύρω] από το cd και α:πό το
2. Π: [Βεβαίως πήγατε στο/]
3. Σ: πως εξετάστηκε [και από ποιους το ότι] καταλήξατε στα είκοσι ονόματα
4. Π: [Ωραία να πάμε λοιπόν/]
5. Σ: με τα-με τους αντίστοιχους λογαριασμούς κι ότι αυτά τα είκοσι τα στείλατε στον κύριο Καπελέρη και ότι εκείνες τις μέρες ε-έγινε και η αντιγραφή από το cd στο stick το usb το οποίο stick το πήρατε εσείς στο γραφείο σας (.) όπως μου είπατε (.) και το cd?
6. Π: Και το cd όπως [είπαμε και πριν το] έχω δώσει για φύλαξη=
7. Σ: [που που που έμεινε?]
8. Σ: =Σε κάποιο [συνεργάτη σας]
9. Π: [Το έχω δώσει] για φύλαξη=
10. Σ: =Τώρα εγώ αν σας πω ότι απορώ γιατί το cd το δίνετε για φύλαξη σε κάποιον συνεργάτη και το USB το κρατάτε εσείς στο γραφείο σας ότι μου δημιουργείται για μεγάλη απορία, θα καταλάβετε ότι είναι κατανοητή η απορία?
11. Π: Ναι θα καταλάβω ότι είναι κατανοητή η απορία.
[Να σας υπενθυμίσω όμως]=
12. Σ: [Και τι θα μου απαντήσετε?]
13. Π: = και πάλι ότι το cd το οποίο έχω εγώ δεν είναι μια λίστα
[είναι δύο χιλιάδες αρχεία]
14. Σ: [Δεν έχει σημασία.] Είναι το αρχικό [είναι το πρωτότυπο.]
15. Π: [Και σας ξαναλέω.] Ο-δεν είναι το πρωτότυπο. Το πρωτότυπο είναι στη Γαλλία. [Το έχω πει τρεις φορές]
16. Σ: [Ναι είναι η κόπια του πρωτοτύπου]
17. Π: Και να σας θυμίσω κυρία Στάη ότι ο υπουργός του μνημονίου δεν έχει ως μοναδική αποκλειστική του ενασχόληση το να ψάχνει και να βρίσκει ε τα αρχεία τα οποία του 'χουν έρθει από τη Γαλλία για φοροφυγάδες. Έχει χιλιάδες πράγματα να κάνει και περνάει δεκατέσσερις ώρες τη μέρα στο γραφείο προσπαθώντας να ισορροπήσει ανάμεσα σε δεκαπέντε βάρκες.
1. Σ: I am not taking you back and forth. [We are-are going in circles] as far as the cd and=

-
2. Π: [Of course you went to/]
3. Σ: =how it was examined [and by whom so that] you ended up with twenty names=
4. Π: [Ok let's get to that then/]
5. Σ: =and the-the corresponding bank accounts and that you sent those twenty names to Mr Kapeleri and that during that time the cd was copied in a usb stick, which you took to your office (.) as you have told me (.) and the cd?
6. Π: And the cd as [we said before] I had given it to be safeguarded =
7. Σ: [where where where was it left?]
8. Σ: =To one of [your partners]
9. Π: [I have given it] to be safeguarded=
10. Σ: =Now if I tell you that I wonder why you gave the cd to be safeguarded by a partner of yours and that you keep the usb at your office, that I am puzzled as to why you did that, will you understand why this query is understandable?
11. Π: Yes I will understand that this query is understandable.
[Let me remind you though]=
12. Σ: [And what will your answer be?]
13. Π: = once again that the cd that I have is not just a list
[it contains two thousand files]
14. Σ: [It doesn't matter.] It is the original [it is the original.]
15. Π: [And I'm telling you once again.]
Tha-it is not the original. The original is in France.
[I have told you three times]
16. Σ: [Yes it is the copy of the original]
17. Π: And let me remind you Ms Stai that the minister of the memorandum does not have as his unique task to be looking for eh and finding the files that have come to him from France on tax-evaders. He has thousands of things to do and he spends fourteen hours a day at his office trying to balance among fifteen boats.

Similarly to excerpts 1-5, Stai frames Papakonstantinou as the defendant by challenging his accounts of the facts concerning the original cd (excerpt 6, turns 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 & 17) and repeatedly reintroducing the question of its whereabouts that

her interlocutor diligently evades. In doing so, she prefaces her questions with accounts of her version of the facts (excerpt 7, turns 1, 3, 5, 8 & 10), either contesting or repeating his evasive accounts. Again similarly to excerpts 1-5, Papakonstantinou, after having repeatedly provided evasive answers, resorts to an indirect challenge of his interlocutors right to determine the agenda of the interview (excerpt 7, turn 17). By challenging power asymmetries of the interview situation, he resists being framed as the defendant.

3.3 The Mc Intyre Interview by Ben Brown on BBC (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txNJ3M2-AVo>, 13/12/2010)

In excerpts (1) to (7) discussed so far, the interviewee had informally, but nevertheless expectedly, been framed as the defendant. As an ex minister of finance, Papakonstantinou's decisions and subsequent actions were (and still are) challenged by fellow politicians, the media as well as the public. Despite the fact that all excerpts discussed henceforth comprise discourse produced by people who have fallen victims (8) or were witnesses to violent deeds (9, 10) and are therefore representing the wronged party, their integrity is repeatedly challenged by means of the interrogative contributions produced by the interviewers and are therefore framed as the defendant party (Γεωργαλίδου 2012).

Example 8 comprises two excerpts of the transcribed interview of Jody Mc Intyre, a young man with cerebral paralysis that was attacked by the British police during a student protest march. Turns 9, 11 and 13 are structured as yes/no questions prefaced with prefatory statements. Turns 25 and 27⁶ comprise prefatory statements recycling prior discourse and have the illocutionary force of yes/no questions, requiring either confirmation (preferably) or refusal of the scenario they are projecting. All 5 prefatory statements propose an alternative narrative of the event, according to which the police's actions can be possibly justified by the interviewee's alleged aggressive behavior against police officers which derives from his "revolutionary" political ideology. Un-copyrighted suggestions (turn 9), intertextual references (turn 13) and formulations of the interviewee's prior discourse (turns 11, 27) repeatedly re-introduce the adversary scenario of provocative action on the part of the interviewee who responds with face threatening acts via which he directly contests the neutrality and objectivity of the interviewer (turns 10, 26 and 28). Despite the fact that

⁶ Both contributions 25 and 27 are structured as declarative rather than as interrogative sentences.

interviewees normally attack the projected scenario rather than their interlocutor (Clayman & Heritage 2002), Mc Intyre directly attacks the interviewer, portraying him not only as malevolent but also as rather foolish (turn 10, “I think to try and justify a police officer pulling a disabled person out of a wheelchair... is quite ridiculous and I’m surprised that you’ve just tried to do so”, as well as in turns 26 and 28 by insinuating that the interviewer is unable to acknowledge the obvious.). He also challenges the interviewer’s authority to determine the agenda by addressing him with yes/no questions (turns 26, 28).

Excerpt 8

(lines omitted)

9. J: Eh, there’s a suggestion that you were rolling towards the police in your wheelchair-e. I-is that true?

10. M: I think to try and justify a police officer pulling a disabled person out of a wheelchair and dragging them across the co-concrete road is quite ridiculous and I’m surprised that you’ve just tried to do so.

11. J: So are you saying that’s not true. You were not wheeling yourself towards the police?

12. M: Well I can’t physically use my wheelchair myself. My brother was pushing me. I think it’s quite obvious from the footage that I was one hundred per cent not a threat to anyone.

13. J: A: In the Observer newspaper you were described as a cyber radical and you were quoted as saying that you want to build a revolutionary movement and that can only happen through direct action on the streets. Do-do you classify yourself as a revolutionary?

14. M: I don’t classify myself as anything but I think we all have the right to fight against what the government are trying to do.

(lines omitted)

25. J: And you didn’t shout a:nything e-provocative or throw anything that would have induced the police to do that to you?

26. M: Do you really think a person with cerebral paralysis in a wheelchair can pose a threat to a police officer who is armed with weapons?

27. J: But you do say that you-you are a revolutionary.

28. M: Tha-that's a word. That's not physical action that I've taken against the police officer. That's a word that you are quoting from a website. But I'm asking you. Do you think I could've in any way posed a physical threat from the seat of my wheelchair to an army of police officers armed with weapons.

3.4 Alexandros Grigoropoulos murder trial (Proceedings, Mixed Jury Court of Amfissa, 2010)

In the proceedings of trials that have been conducted based on short-hand notes made at the time of the procedure rather than by means of transcribing recorded files, important information as to the actual talk-in-interaction is lost. As responsive contributions are the ones almost exclusively rendered textual form, the content of preceding questions can only be retrieved via the content of the response. As much as conversation analytic methodology cannot be applied to such data, analysis of discourse of this genre (Παναρέτου 2006) -that is rather unorthodox- can lead to useful conclusions.

The defense counselor in the trial under scrutiny chose to defend his client (Epaminondas Korkoneas, the officer who shot and killed the fifteen year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos) by attacking the integrity and trustworthiness of witnesses that happened to be the peers and friends of the victim. He portrayed them as members of left anarchist groups that used to take part in acts of violence. For one, this line of defense was formally stated in his introductory and concluding speech. It is also retrievable based on the content of the witnesses' responsive contributions. Answers (excerpt 10-2) recycle the questions⁷ (*"What is important, charming, that children of my age from other areas of Athens, Filothei, Psychiko, come to Exsarchia and hang out in a recess such as the one you are showing me,*) refusing to acknowledge their derogatory insinuations (*I cannot understand in your question, you do not need to be charmed by something to go there."*), or (excerpt 9-1) contest allegations as to one's ideology and family status (*"I have never participated in antiauthoritarian events, neither I nor my brother. I live with a normal family."*). They (excerpt 10-3) resist entailments (if you hang out in Exarchia you are a member

⁷ *Italics* is used to mark the structures discussed. Numbers indicate the position of structures within the excerpts. Otherwise texts retain the form in which they appear in the Proceedings of the Grigoropoulos trial.

of anarchist groups therefore, you are violent by definition) and (excerpt 10-4) presuppositions and stereotypes (Exarchia is an outlaw area –people who hang out in Exarchia exhibit delinquent behaviour), which aim at allocating blame (Ehrlich 2010: 278) for the murder towards the victim and away from the defendant.

Excerpt 9

(Testimony of Tsibitzidis aged 18, Proceedings, p. 75)

Τότε που έγινε το περιστατικό, προετοιμαζόμουν για εξετάσεις, ήμουν 17 χρόνων. Δεν είχα καθημερινές εξόδους γιατί διάβαζα. Εκείνο το βράδυ πήγα εκεί γιατί θα συναντούσα ένα φίλο μου τον Γιώργο Καρατέρο που πήγαινε φροντιστήριο εκεί. (1) *Δεν έχω συμμετάσχει σε αντιεξουσιαστικές εκδηλώσεις, ούτε εγώ ούτε ο αδελφός μου. Ζω σε μια συγκροτημένη οικογένεια. Υπάρχουν πολλά φροντιστήρια στη περιοχή και συχνάζουν πολλά παιδιά.*

When the incident happened, I was preparing for examinations, I was seventeen years old. I wasn't going out on a daily basis because I was studying. That night I went there to meet my friend George Karatero who was attending a tutoring center there. (1) *I have never participated in antiauthoritarian events neither I nor my brother. I am a member of a normal family.* There are many tutoring centers there and many kids hang out in the area.

Excerpt 10

(Testimony of Tselentis aged 16, Proceedings, p. 207)

Ο πατέρας μου είναι καθηγητής στο Πανεπιστήμιο, σε περιβαλλοντολογικά θέματα. (2) *Ποιο είναι το σημαντικό, το γοητευτικό, που παιδιά της ηλικίας μου από άλλες περιοχές της Αθήνας, τη Φιλοθέη, το Ψυχικό, έρχονται (3-4) εκεί στα Εξάρχεια και κάθονται σε μια τέτοια εσοχή που μου δείχνετε, δεν μπορώ να καταλάβω στην ερώτησή σας, δεν χρειάζεται να σε γοητεύει κάτι για να πας εκεί. Δεν ξέρω τι τα τραβάει εκεί. Στη Τζαβέλα δεν υπάρχει μαγαζί που να πουλάει σάντουιτς, υπάρχουν στη Κωλέτη και Μεσολογγίου.*

My father is a professor at the University, he teaches environmental issues. (1) *What is important, charming, that children of my age from other areas of Athens, Filothei, Psychiko, come (3-4) to Exsarchia and hung out in a recess*

such as the one you are showing me, I cannot understand your question, you do not need to be charmed by something in order to go there. I do not know what attracts them there. In Tzavela St there are no shops that sell sandwiches, there are some in Koleti and Mesologiou.

In excerpts 8-10, institutional interviewers (the journalist and the defense attorney alike) frame interviewees as less than dependable narrators of the events under scrutiny projecting their alleged ideologies as pertaining to political extremes. By doing so, they reverse victim/defendant identities and construct interviewees as the defendant. The means to this end is the act of questioning: prefaced questions recount adversary accounts of events and recycle information (or even hearsay) presented in different sources. Participants acknowledge being framed as the defendant by resisting such constructions. In their responsive contributions they contest allegations and even counterattack by reversing power relationships and challenging the authority of the interviewer to determine the agenda therefore reconstructing institutionally defined speech exchange systems.

4. Conclusion

Institutions perceived as not directly connected, nevertheless, exhibit similar discourse modes: they organize conversation in both comparable and compatible ways, question-answer pairs being a constitutive element of the respective genres. Question types and the pragmatic acts they perform are horizontally distributed to all three genres of talk in media, political/parliamentary and forensic settings. Questions function as arbiters of reality (Tracy & Robles 2002); rather than exclusively requesting information as their original design prescribes, they indirectly introduce and (at times progressively) construct alternative accounts of the facts under discussion. In highly adversarial contexts, as the contemporary political news interview and forensic/investigative procedures, they tend to be persistently reformulated and reintroduced. In the answer pair parts on the other hand, interlocutors acknowledge the power of various question types to manipulate the construction of realities and they exhibit their perception by either accepting or resisting their implicatures. All in all, paraphrasing Mey (2001), questions can be dangerous (pragmatic) objects requiring further research.

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